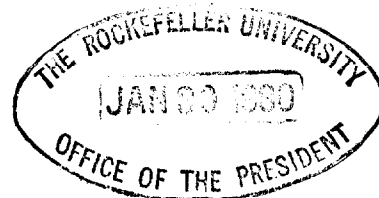


Wilson



280 First Avenue, #10F
New York, New York 10009
January 28, 1980

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
President
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

As a former member of the Rockefeller University family, let me congratulate you on your appointment as President and on the energy of your leadership. Even from a distance, I have been much impressed with the new focus and direction you have been providing for the University, especially because we seem to share some concerns which have, unfortunately, been neglected in the past. I wondered if I might share with you some of my thoughts on how Rockefeller University might expand its present role to take an even more powerful lead as the scientific community moves into the 21st century.

I'm sure you've noticed the extent to which a large proportion of the general populace has, in recent years, become disillusioned with organized science. While this disillusionment may have begun as part of the "anti-establishment" cults of the late '60's, it has gradually become established in the public consciousness. As with the blue-jean craze in the fashion world, what began as a protest has been adopted as the norm. For example, ortho-molecular medicine has spawned the health food craze; chiropractic, as recently examined on 60 Minutes, continues to victimize the gullible; while the coincidental concurrence of the Three Mile Island problem with the debut of the film "China Syndrome" has given birth to the fanatical "No Nukes" movement. Each of these causes has its prominent spokesmen, spurious celebrities like Carlton Fredricks or Jane Fonda, who was able to gather hundreds of thousands of followers at the "No Nukes" rally in Battery Park last fall.

Unfortunately, throughout all this, the scientific establishment has remained silent, its adherents disorganized, lacking an effective forum from which to answer their attackers. Does not the glaring need for a rallying point at which orthodox science could gather to present and promote its position offer Rockefeller University a unique opportunity for valuable public service? The motto of the University has always been "Pro Bono Humanitas," and in that spirit I wonder if the University has considered mounting a series of colloquia or seminars on the subject of "Science and Society." The program could serve as the mouthpiece for the scientific establishment as we know it and demonstrate concretely that scientific advances provide not problems but promise. ✓

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I envision a series of lectures or debates which might start by stressing such practical advances as the eradication of Bubonic plague and smallpox. Next, the vast extent to which our general sense of ourselves as living beings has been enlarged by the philosophical and theoretical research conducted by gifted and dedicated scientists since Galileo could be examined. Subsequent sessions might focus on how both applied and pure research strive to ameliorate the future, considering questions of energy, food, in vitro fertilization and genetic engineering, space colonization and exploration, the interaction of chemistry and psychology. It might even be amusing to allow spokesmen for orthodox and ortho-molecular medicine to confront each other, and to follow that carefully supervised debate by another between a nuclear engineer and Jane Fonda!

Without going too deeply into the details of such a lecture series, I would like to suggest that Rockefeller University is uniquely qualified to serve as its host. The reputation of the University as a leader in the propagation and dissemination of knowledge will serve as a valuable resource in attracting eminent scientists from other institutions throughout the world to complement the expertise of the distinguished researchers already on campus. Moreover, hosting such a seminar could not fail to bring the University to the forefront of public attention. Even if the individual presentations are beyond the understanding of most laymen, with proper publicity their contents will reach the general public through the science editors of the print and electronic media. Such advertisement of the University and its public concern might well prove a powerful fund-raising tool. There are undoubtedly many concerned individuals and corporations like Oscar Dystal of Bantam Books who, you may recall, made a substantial donation to the University for the furtherance of Dr. Zabriskie's multiple sclerosis research. In these days when former levels of funding must be obtained through triple the number of grant applications, tapping the resources available in the private sector seems imperative if the University is to continue its invaluable work.

Eleanor Gibson tells me that you recently appeared on a cable TV program discussing some of the areas I've touched; I wish I had known! Failing that, I would appreciate a chance to meet and talk with you. I'm enclosing my resume so that you can get a sense of just who it is who is spinning these lofty, idealistic plans for the University, and will call your office later in the week to see if we can get together. ✓

Yours very truly,

Alicia Tobin Wilson
Alicia Tobin Wilson
(used to be Dr. Zabriskie's
secretary) mgz

ATW/s
Enclosure